

The Highland Council

14 May, 2015

Agenda Item	14
Report No	HC/19/15

Fifth Review of Electoral Arrangements Highland Council Area – Proposals for Wards

Report by Chief Executive

Summary

The report summarises the proposals put forward by the Local Government Boundary Commission for Scotland for changes to the ward boundaries in the Highland Council area; highlights alternative suggestions made by Members where there has been unanimity at Ward Business Meetings and offers possible proposals to give effect to those suggestions.

1. Background

- 1.1 The Local Government Boundary Commission for Scotland was established by the Local Government (Scotland) Act 1973. Since being passed, the Act has been amended by various pieces of legislation. The Commission's duties and powers with respect to local government boundaries are detailed in Sections 12 to 28 of the 1973 Act.
- 1.2 As part of the Fifth Reviews of Electoral Arrangements, the Commission published its proposals for the number of councillors for each council on 29 May, 2014. It was proposed that for Highland there would be a reduction from the current 80 councillors to 72. However, following consideration of ward designs they decided that 74 councillors would provide better electoral parity and would also better recognise local community ties.
- 1.3 The Commission presented their proposals for the ward boundaries for the Highland Council area to the Council on 19 March, 2015 and these proposals are the subject of a two month consultation with the Council which will run until 19 May, 2015. The Commission's proposals are attached at appendix 1.
- 1.4 After consideration of the responses from Councils, the Commission will undertake a 12 week public consultation on their proposals for wards between July and October, 2015.
- 1.5 The Commission expects to submit its final recommendations to Scottish Ministers by May, 2016, in time for implementation for the next local government elections in May, 2017.

2. Methodology

2.1 The Local Governance (Scotland) Act 2014 specifies that each ward will return either 3 or 4 councillors. The Commission have designed each ward so that its number of electors justifies either 3 or 4 councillors by taking the following factors into consideration:

- Electoral parity – seeks to ensure the same number of electors per councillor in all wards of a council area;
- Electorate change – takes account of likely change in the number or distribution of electorate over a five year period;
- Local ties - reflects local ties;
- Easily identifiable boundaries - takes into account the desirability of fixing boundaries that are and will remain easily identifiable;
- Special geographical considerations – can move away from strict adherence to electoral parity for a ward where there are special geographical considerations that make it desirable to do so; and
- Effective and convenient local government – ability of local authorities to provide all of the services they are responsible for in an effective and convenient manner and the ability of individual councillors to effectively represent their ward.

2.2 The Commission have developed their proposals using electorate data from 1 September, 2013 and have taken into account likely changes in the number of electors by considering forecast electorate counts in 2019. They have also confirmed that while the dataset does not include 16 and 17 year olds, they are content that their proposals would not be affected by the inclusion of 16 and 17 year olds on the electoral register.

3. Proposed Ward Boundaries for the Highland Council

3.1 The Commission have proposed to effect the reduction in Councillor numbers in Highland from 80 to 74 by making the following changes:

- A reduction of two councillors in Caithness and the incorporation of the Landward Caithness ward into two new Caithness wards
- A reduction of one Councillor in the Black Isle ward.
- A reduction of one Councillor in the Inverness Central ward
- A reduction of one Councillor in the Inverness Ness Side ward
- A reduction of one Councillor in the Culloden ward

3.2 In terms of changes to wards the following changes are proposed to wards:

- Landward Caithness is disestablished and split between ward 2 (Thurso), and ward 3 (Wick) with both wards becoming four member wards;

- Dingwall and Seaforth gains Redcastle area;
- Black Isle loses Redcastle area and becomes a three member ward;
- Inverness West takes part of Dalneigh and loses Dunain;
- Inverness Central loses part of Dalneigh and becomes a three member ward;
- Inverness Ness Side loses part of Hilton and becomes a three member ward;
- Inverness Millburn gains part of Hilton, Inverness Retail Park and Resaurie;
- Culloden & Ardersier loses Ardersier and becomes a three member ward; and
- Nairn gains Ardersier.

4. Comment on the proposals

- 4.1 While the Commission has broadly sought to ensure parity in terms of electors per councillor, it has taken account of the special geographical circumstances that exist in the Highlands.
- 4.2 The Commission has sought to minimise the changes in Highland and retain as many of the existing ward boundaries as possible. It has recognised the special geographical circumstances of the North, West and Central Sutherland ward and has retained Skye as a single ward.
- 4.3 Ward Managers had been asked to convene Ward Business Meetings to give members the opportunity to discuss the proposals as they relate to their ward. Following those discussions the following suggestions have come forward on the basis of consensus within that ward(s) and where relevant neighbouring affected ward(s).
- A request from Caithness Members for three wards with three members instead of the proposed two wards with four member wards;
 - A request from Nairn Members to bring Cawdor into Nairn and a request from Culloden Members for Ardersier to remain in Culloden; and
 - A request from Black Isle Members that the existing Black Isle ward remains as currently configured.
- 4.4 In order to give effect to these suggestions, the following proposals have been developed using electorate data from 2015. This provides the latest information on electorate numbers in the wards; however it does mean that a direct comparison with the Commission's proposals cannot be made as they used electorate data from 2013.

5. Caithness

5.1 In order to create three wards with three members in Caithness whose electorate totals would be as close as possible to the 10% of parity figure, the following proposal has been developed:

- Polling Districts C04I, C04J and C04K would be moved from Landward Caithness to Wick, increasing Wick's electorate from 5,692 to an estimated 6,490, 12.2% below parity.
- Polling Districts C04B and C04N would be moved from Landward Caithness to Thurso, increasing Thurso's Electorate from 6,294 to an estimated 7,483, 1.3% above parity.
- In consequence, Landward Caithness's Electorate would decrease from 8,600 to an estimated 6,613, 10.5% below Parity.

This proposal would result in an additional member for Caithness (increasing from 8 to 9) and would see the overall total of proposed members for the Highland Council increase from 74 to 75.

5.2 Although these suggested changes do not fall within $\pm 10\%$ of Parity, only one is outwith this figure; and the suggested wards do contain Polling Districts of approximately the same character and geography.

A revised boundary map is attached at Appendix 2.

6. Nairn - Cawdor & Culloden - Ardersier

6.1 In order to transfer Cawdor into Nairn and for Ardersier to be transferred back into the Culloden ward the following proposal has been developed:

- Polling District I18G with an estimated 594 electors would be moved from the proposed Culloden ward. This would create a Nairn and Cawdor ward with an estimated 10,182 electors, 3.3% above parity.
- Part of Polling District I18F with an estimated 1,157 electors in Ardersier would be moved from the proposed Nairn and Ardersier ward to the proposed Culloden ward. This would create a Culloden and Ardersier ward with an estimated 8,305 electors, 12.4% above parity on the basis of the proposed three member ward.

A revised boundary map is attached at Appendix 3.

7. Black Isle

7.1 In order for the Black Isle ward to remain as it is currently configured the following proposal has been developed:

- Parts of the Redcastle Polling Districts R10A (S) & R10C (W) with an estimated electorate of 366 would be transferred back from the proposed Dingwall and Seaforth ward, which would result in the Black Isle ward having an electorate of 8,647 which would be 17% above parity on the basis of the proposed three member ward.
- The proposed Dingwall and Seaforth ward would be reduced by an estimated 366 electors, which would result in it being 2.6% below parity.

A revised boundary map is attached at Appendix 4.

8. Implications

- 8.1 It is not anticipated that there will be any Legal, Equalities; Climate Change/Carbon Clever, Risk or Gaelic implications. However it is likely that there will be Resource and Rural implications, but until the Commission have finalised their proposals it is difficult to predict precisely what they will be.

Recommendation

Members are asked to consider whether the following alternative proposals should be submitted to the Local Government Boundary Commission for their consideration.

a) Caithness

Creation of three wards with three members in Caithness by:

- Moving Polling Districts C04I, C04J and C04K from Landward Caithness to Wick, increasing Wick's electorate from 5,692 to an estimated 6,490, 12.2% below parity.
- Moving Polling Districts C04B and C04N from Landward Caithness to Thurso, increasing Thurso's Electorate from 6,294 to an estimated 7,483, 1.3% above parity.
- In consequence, Landward Caithness's Electorate decreases from 8,600 to an estimated 6,613, 10.5% below Parity.

This proposal would result in an additional member for Caithness (increasing from 8 to 9) and would see the overall total of proposed members for the Highland Council increase from 74 to 75.

b) Nairn - Cawdor & Culloden - Ardersier

Transfer Cawdor into Nairn by:

- Moving Polling District I18G with an estimated 594 electors from the proposed Culloden Ward. This would create a Nairn and Cawdor ward with an estimated 10,182 electors, 3.3% above parity.

Transfer Ardersier back into the Culloden ward by:

- Moving part of Polling District I18F with an estimated 1,157 electors in Ardersier from the proposed Nairn and Ardersier ward to the proposed Culloden ward. This would create a Culloden and Ardersier ward with an estimated 8,305 electors, 12.4% above parity.

c) Black Isle

Retain the Black Isle ward as it is currently configured by:

- Moving parts of the Redcastle Polling Districts R10A (S) & R10C (W) with an estimated electorate of 366 from the proposed Dingwall and Seaforth ward back to the Black Isle ward, which would result in the Black Isle ward having an estimated electorate of 8,647 which would be 17% above parity with the proposed three member ward.

The proposed Dingwall and Seaforth ward would be reduced by an estimated 366 electors, which would result in it being 2.6% below parity.

Designation: Chief Executive

Date: 5 May, 2015

Author: Gordon Morrison, Parliamentary Officer

Background Papers: Fifth Reviews of Electoral Arrangements Highland Council Area – Proposals for Wards

Local Government Boundary Commission for Scotland

Fifth Reviews of Electoral Arrangements

Highland Council Area Proposals for wards



March 2015

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Membership of the Commission

Chairman: Mr Ronnie Hinds

Deputy Chairman: Mr William Magee

Commissioners: Mr Roland Bean
Prof. Ailsa Henderson
Dr Susan Walker

Secretary to the Commission: Dr Hugh Buchanan (to October 2014)
Ms Isabel Drummond-Murray (from October 2014)

Contents

Introduction.....	1
The reviews	1
Our proposals for wards in Scotland.....	2
Consultation on our proposals for wards	2
Proposals for wards in Highland council area	4

Introduction

1. The Local Government Boundary Commission for Scotland is an independent, non-political body whose purpose is to make recommendations for local government administrative and electoral boundaries in Scotland.
2. We are tasked by the Local Government (Scotland) Act 1973 to undertake reviews of local government electoral arrangements in Scotland. These reviews are our fifth periodic reviews of local government electoral arrangements in Scotland since we were first established in 1973. We intend to submit a report containing our recommendations for electoral arrangements for each council area in Scotland to the Scottish Ministers by May 2016, in time for implementation for the next local government elections in May 2017.
3. This booklet contains a summary of our proposals for Scotland as a whole and our proposals for wards in Highland council area, and information on how to participate in our consultation with councils **from 19 March to 19 May 2015**.

The reviews

4. In 2011 we consulted the public on our methodology for determining councillor numbers. The results of that consultation can be found on our website www.lgbc-scotland.gov.uk
5. We formally began the current reviews on 21 February 2014. We consulted councils and the public on our proposals for councillor numbers for each council between February 2014 and August 2014. We have now considered all the submissions received during these consultations. We have reached a decision on councillor numbers and the associated ward designs and are now presenting our proposals for wards for further consultation. The meeting papers that informed our deliberations and the minutes of our meetings are referenced on page 4. Details of how to participate in the consultation are given below.
6. For each electoral ward, we make recommendations about its boundary, its name and the number of councillors to represent the ward (legislation restricts this to either 3 or 4 councillors).
7. When reviewing electoral arrangements the legislation requires us to take account of the following factors:
 - the interests of effective and convenient local government;
 - within each council, that each councillor should represent the same number of electors as nearly as may be;
 - local ties which would be broken by making a particular boundary;
 - the desirability of fixing boundaries that are easily identifiable; and
 - special geographical considerations.
8. For further information on the policies and procedures we have adopted to underpin these reviews and the legal requirements for ward design, please refer to our *Guidance Booklet*, which is available on our website http://www.lgbc-scotland.gov.uk/reviews/5th_electoral/resources.asp or on request.

Our proposals for wards in Scotland

9. We developed our proposals using electorate data from 1 September 2013. The number of electors registered in each council electoral ward on that date can be found on our website. In developing our proposals for wards, we have had regard to the likely changes in the number of electors by considering forecast electorate counts in 2019. The methodology we have used to forecast electorates can be found on our website. Whilst the dataset does not include 16 and 17 year olds, we have considered the impact their inclusion on the electoral register would have and are content that this would not affect our proposals.
10. Our proposals use population size to set councillor numbers. In keeping with past reviews we have created categories of similar councils to set ratios of councillors to electors. In doing so, we have used population distribution and levels of deprivation to group councils together. Population size, however, remains the biggest determinant of councillor numbers and the design of wards.
11. We consulted on proposals for councillor numbers in 2014. In 5 council areas, we have changed the number of councillors proposed for the area from our original proposals for councillor numbers because it allows us to take better account of the factors in the legislation during ward design. Overall, our proposals provide for 1,217 councillors representing 351 wards in Scotland: a decrease of 6 councillors and 2 wards from existing electoral arrangements.
12. Our proposals for wards include unchanged electoral arrangements in 2 council areas and minor changes in 2 other council areas.
13. Nationally, over 96% of proposed wards are forecast to be within 10% of parity for the council area. At present 17% of existing wards are 10% or more from parity. Only 2 proposed wards are forecast to be more than 15% from parity, compared to 19 existing wards.
14. Our proposals improve parity between councillors in terms of the number of electors they represent (the forecast average variation from a council area's parity per councillor improves from 6.0% for existing wards to 4.6% for proposed wards).
15. In general we have sought to construct wards from complete local sub-geographies such as community council areas. In our proposals for wards almost 80% of community council areas are wholly within wards. In a few council areas, we have adopted ward designs that recognise other locally-significant boundaries such as community planning areas, neighbourhoods or natural communities.

Consultation on our proposals for wards

16. The legislation provides that we must first of all consult on our proposals with councils. This consultation on our proposals for wards runs from 19 March 2015 until 19 May 2015. After consideration of responses to this consultation with councils, we intend to conduct a 12-week public consultation on our proposals for wards between July and October 2015. Depending on the outcome of the consultation, we may further develop and consult on our proposals later in 2015. We expect to submit our reports containing our final recommendations to the Scottish Ministers by May 2016.
17. Further copies of this booklet are available on request.

18. We welcome all comments on our proposals to help inform our deliberations.
Comments can be made in the following ways:

in writing to: Local Government Boundary Commission for Scotland
Thistle House
91 Haymarket Terrace
Edinburgh EH12 5HD

by email to: comments@scottishboundaries.gov.uk

19. All comments we receive in response to this consultation will be available to view on our website in due course. For further information, please visit our website.
20. Where comments contain objections to our proposals, it would be helpful if they could be accompanied by alternative proposals that take account of statutory requirements and consider the consequences on the council area as a whole.

Proposals for wards in Highland council area

21. The maps on the following pages illustrate our Proposals for wards in Highland council area. We present an electoral arrangement for 74 councillors representing 10 3-member wards and 11 4-member wards, reducing the number of wards in the area by 1 and reducing councillor numbers by 6. Our methodology for calculating councillor numbers proposed 72 councillors but during our consideration of ward designs we agreed 74 councillors because it allows better electoral parity and recognises local community ties such as the Caithness and Sutherland county boundary.

22. Our proposals for the council area:

- improve overall forecast parity;
- address forecast disparities in existing wards: 2 (Thurso), 3 (Wick), 6 (Wester Ross, Strathpeffer and Lochalsh), 17 (Inverness Millburn), 20 (Inverness South) and 21 (Badenoch and Strathspey);
- make changes to ward boundaries by Ardersier, Black Isle, Caithness and Inverness;
- make no changes to existing ward boundaries 1, 5, 6, 7, 8, 11, 12, 20, 21 and 22;
- apply special geographic circumstances in Caithness and Sutherland to retain local community ties; and
- rename *Culloden and Ardersier* ward to *Culloden* and *Nairn* ward to *Nairn and Ardersier*. In Caithness create two new wards called: *Thurso and Northwest Caithness* and *Wick and East Caithness* but make no changes to other ward names.

23. We discussed the proposals for Highland council area at our meetings of 25 November 2014, 18 December 2014 and 13 January 2015, (see LGBCS Paper 2257/14). We decided on our proposals at our meetings of 3 February 2015 and 3 March 2015 (see LGBCS Paper 2276/15).

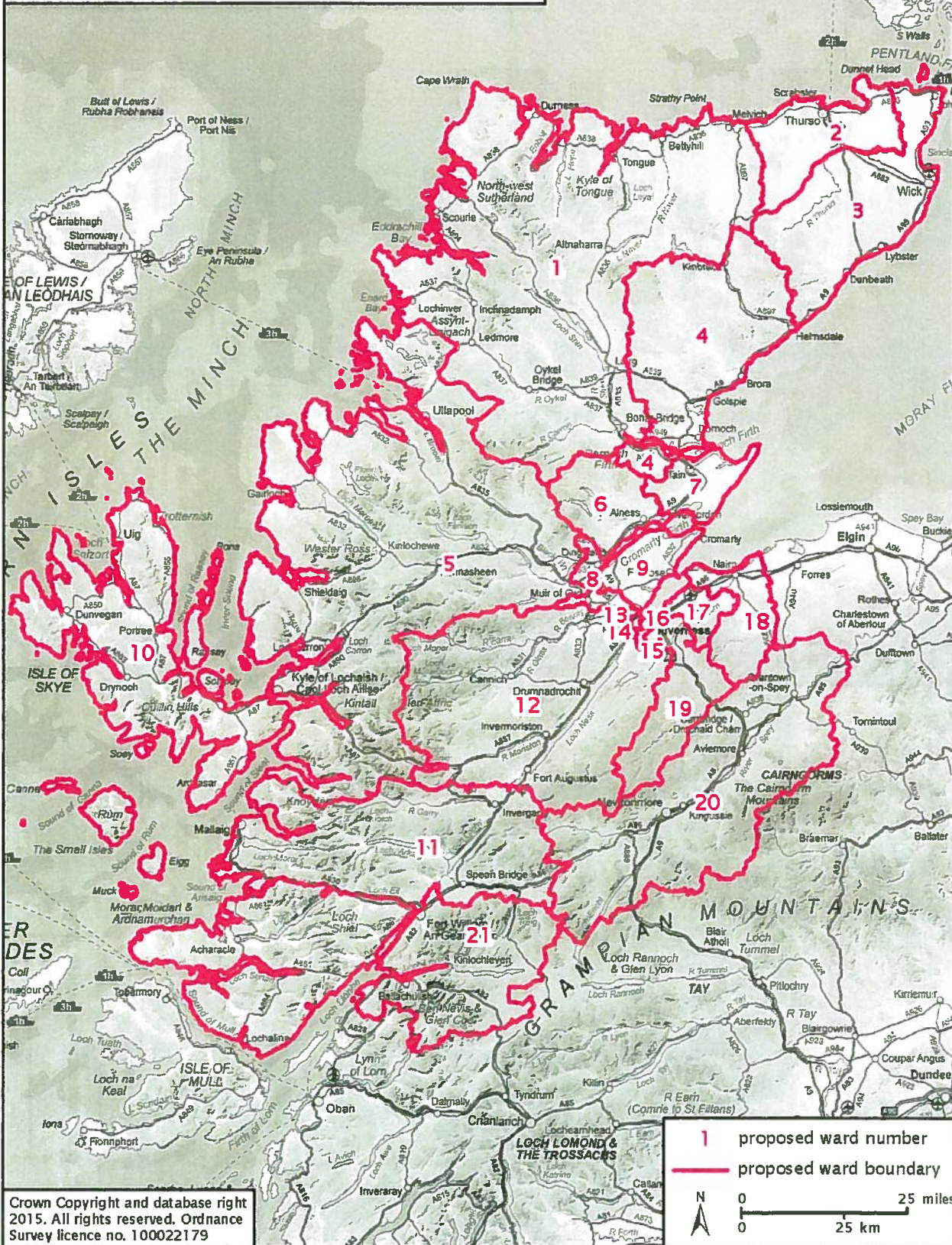
24. Table 1 below details the electorates with actual and forecast variation from parity of the proposed wards.

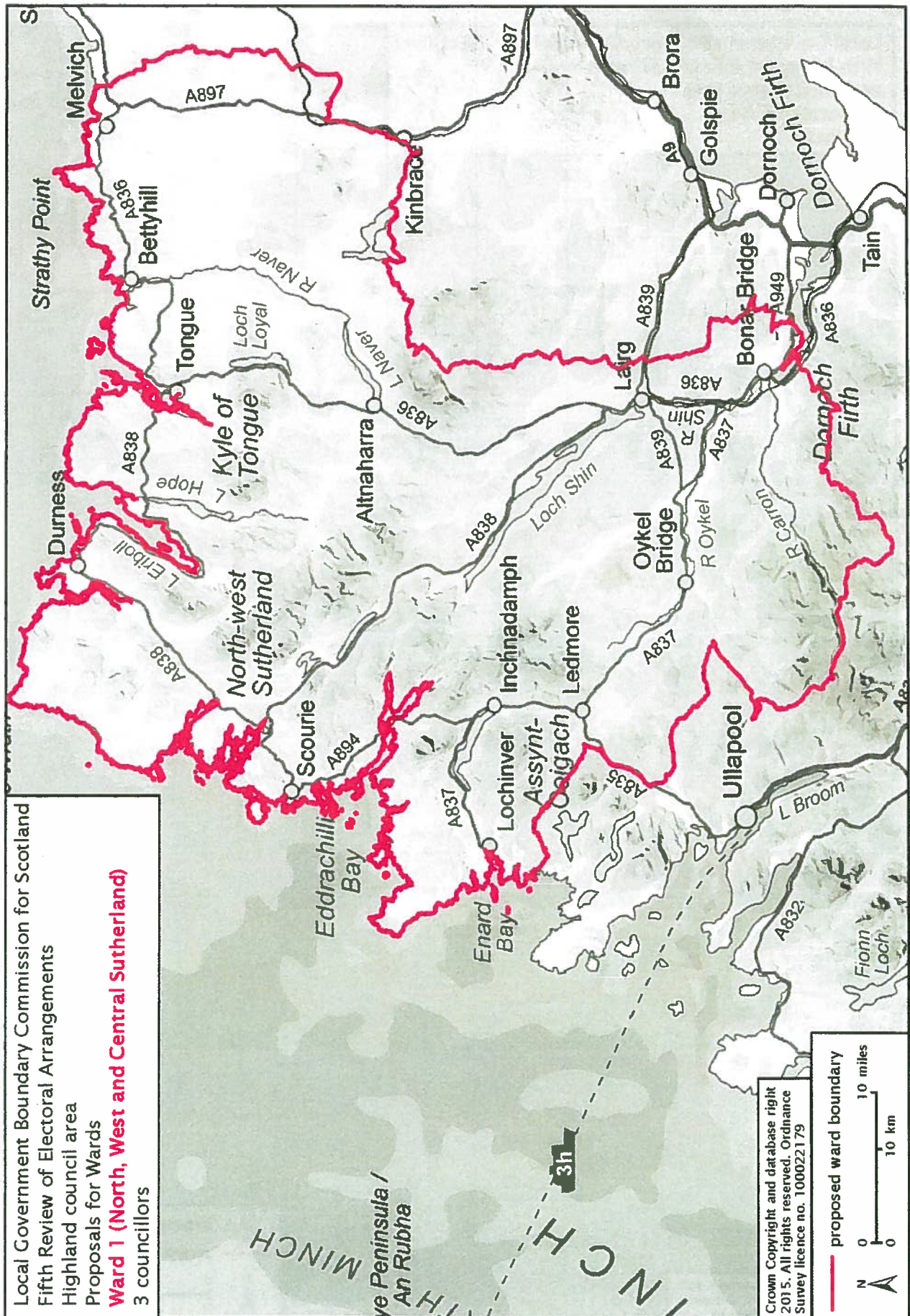
ward no.	ward name	cllrs	electorate Sept 13	actual variation from parity	forecast electorate 2019	forecast variation from parity
1	North, West and Central Sutherland	3	4,940	-32%	5,048	-32%
2	Thurso and Northwest Caithness	4	10,175	5%	9,889	0%
3	Wick and East Caithness	4	10,189	5%	10,399	6%
4	East Sutherland and Edderton	3	6,219	-14%	6,394	-13%
5	Wester Ross, Strathpeffer and Lochalsh	4	9,750	1%	10,439	6%
6	Cromarty Firth	4	9,475	-2%	9,484	-4%
7	Tain and Easter Ross	3	7,103	-2%	7,152	-3%

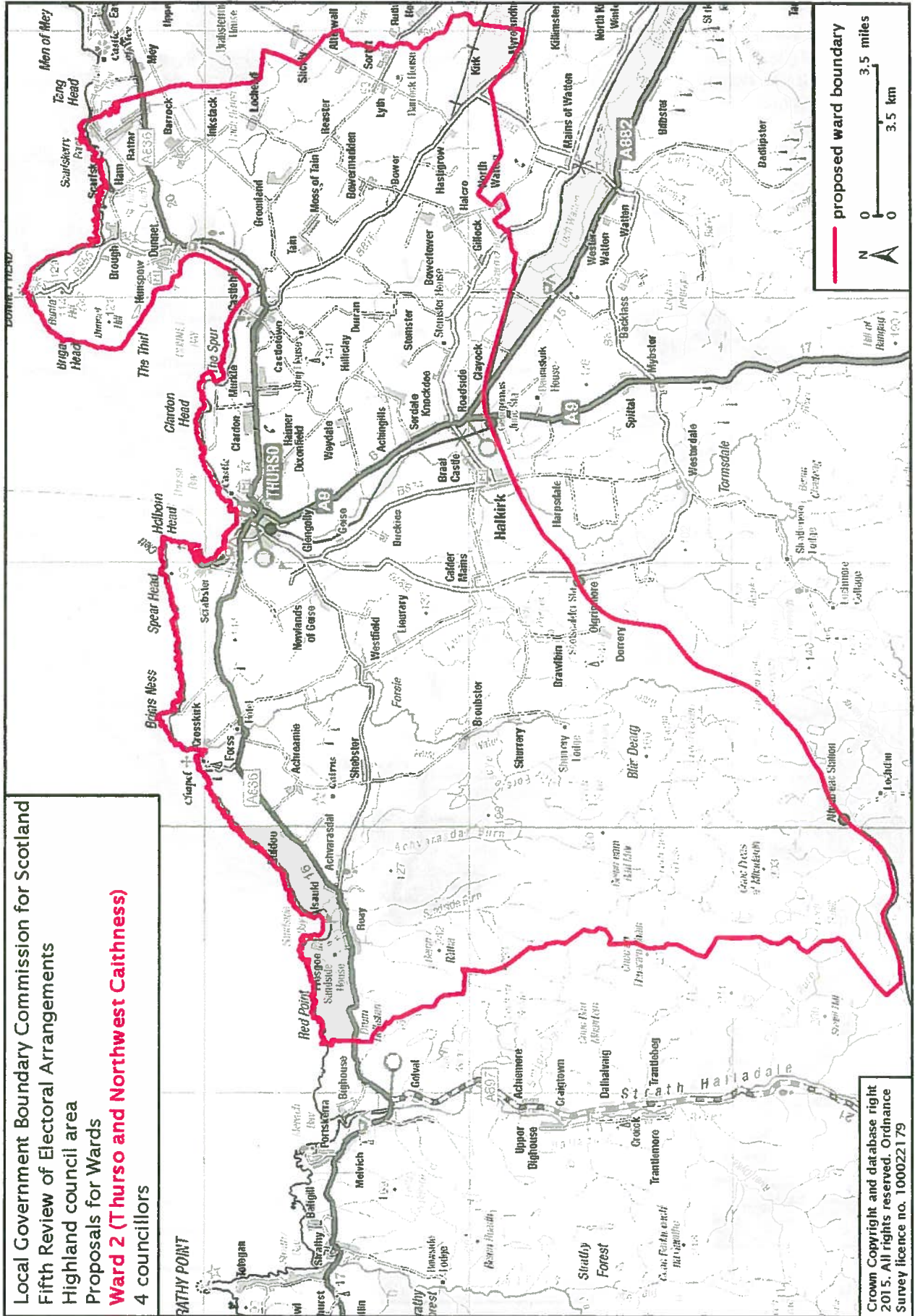
8	Dingwall and Seaforth	4	9,681	0%	9,689	-2%
9	Black Isle	3	7,971	10%	8,059	9%
10	Eilean a' Chèò	4	8,378	-13%	8,867	-10%
11	Caol and Mallaig	3	6,861	-5%	7,461	1%
12	Aird and Loch Ness	4	9,223	-5%	9,484	-4%
13	Inverness West	3	8,162	13%	8,080	9%
14	Inverness Central	3	8,461	17%	8,082	9%
15	Inverness Ness-side	3	7,760	7%	7,595	3%
16	Inverness Millburn	3	7,549	4%	7,481	1%
17	Culloden	3	7,660	6%	7,664	4%
18	Nairn and Ardersier	4	10,294	6%	10,373	5%
19	Inverness South	4	9,983	3%	10,712	9%
20	Badenoch and Strathspey	4	10,299	7%	10,683	8%
21	Fort William and Ardnamurchan	4	8,705	-10%	9,260	-6%
	Totals	74	178,838	8%	182,295	7%

Table 1 - proposed wards' electorate counts.

Local Government Boundary Commission for Scotland
 Fifth Review of Electoral Arrangements
 Highland council area
 Proposals for Wards
All Wards



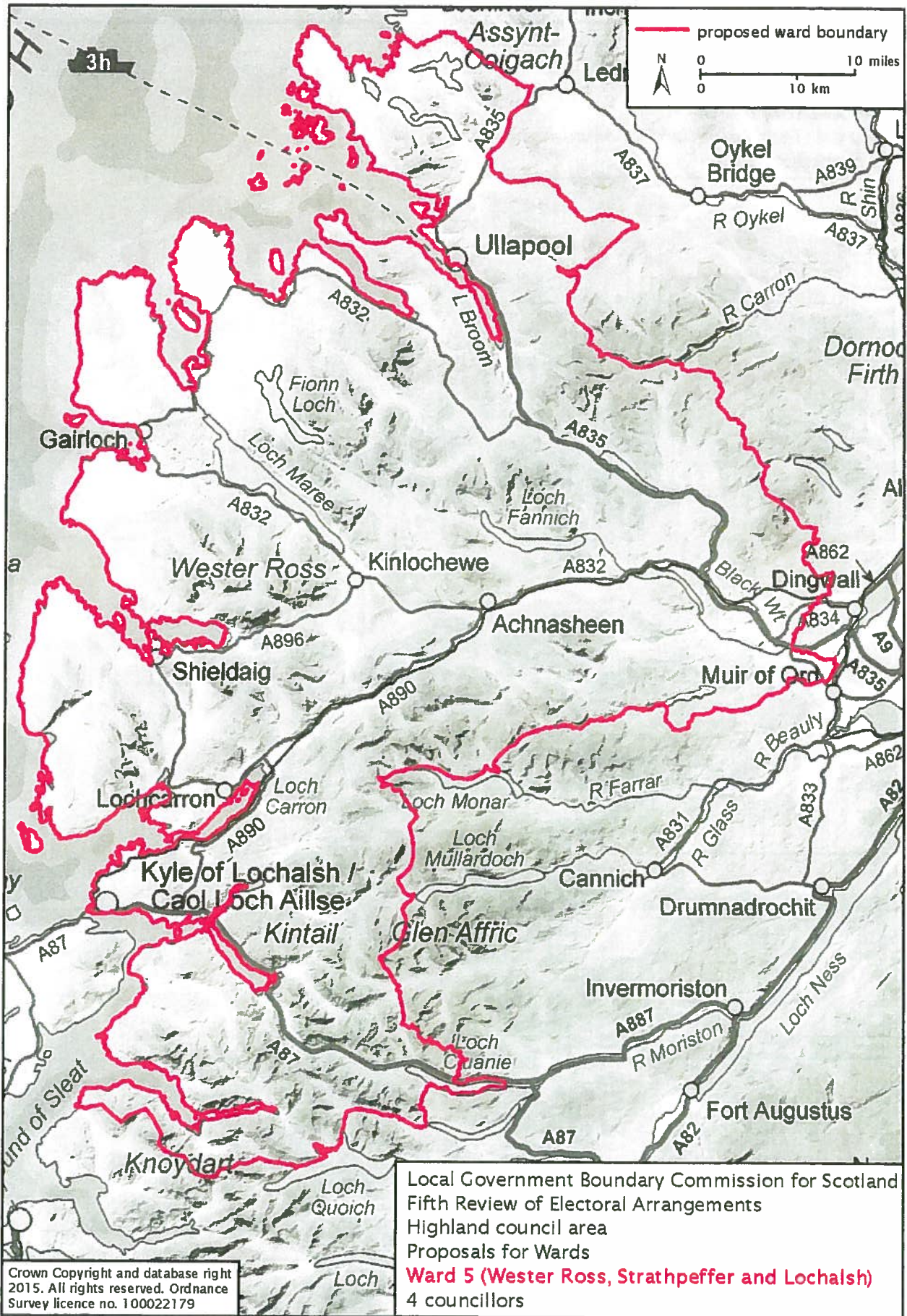


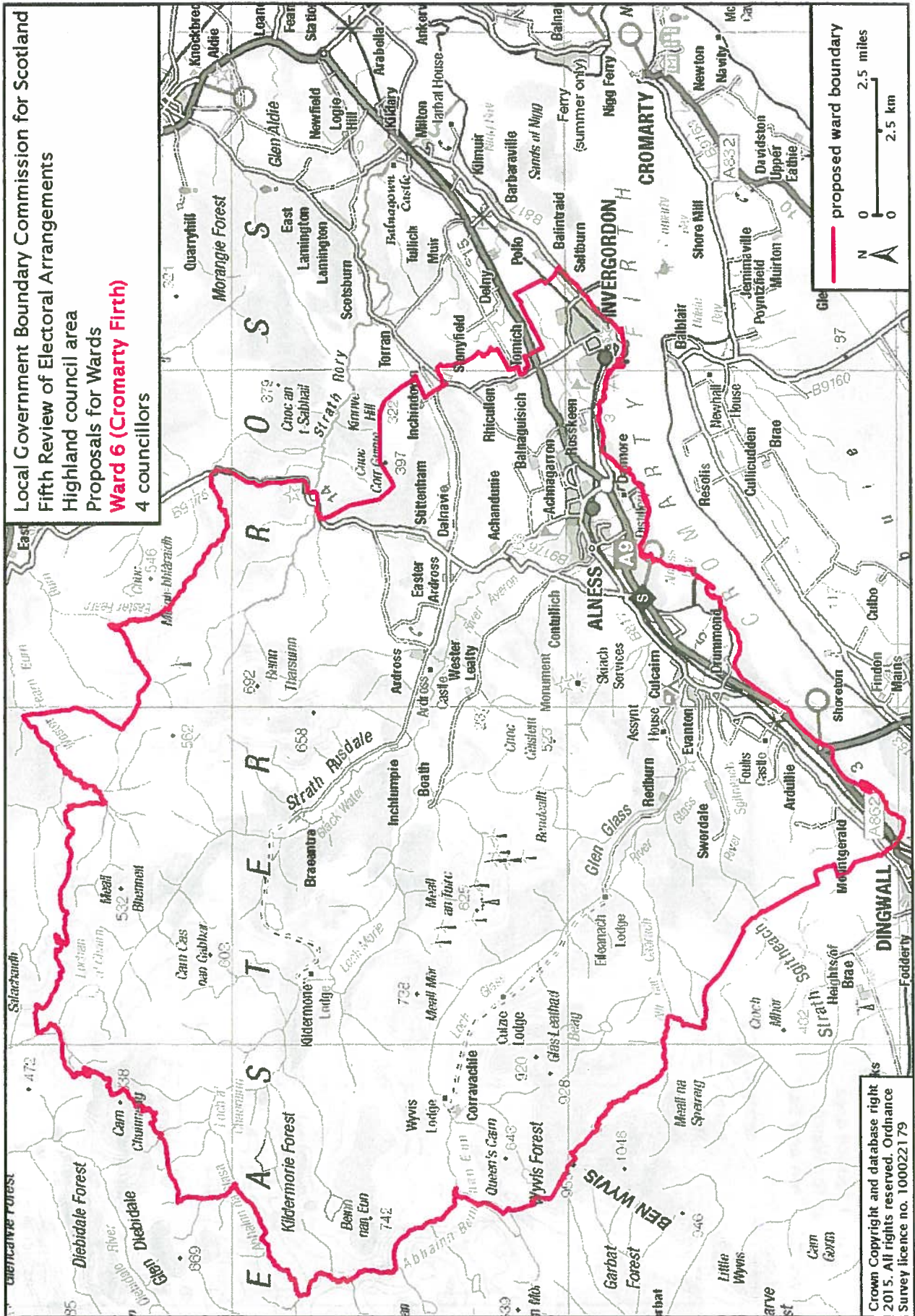


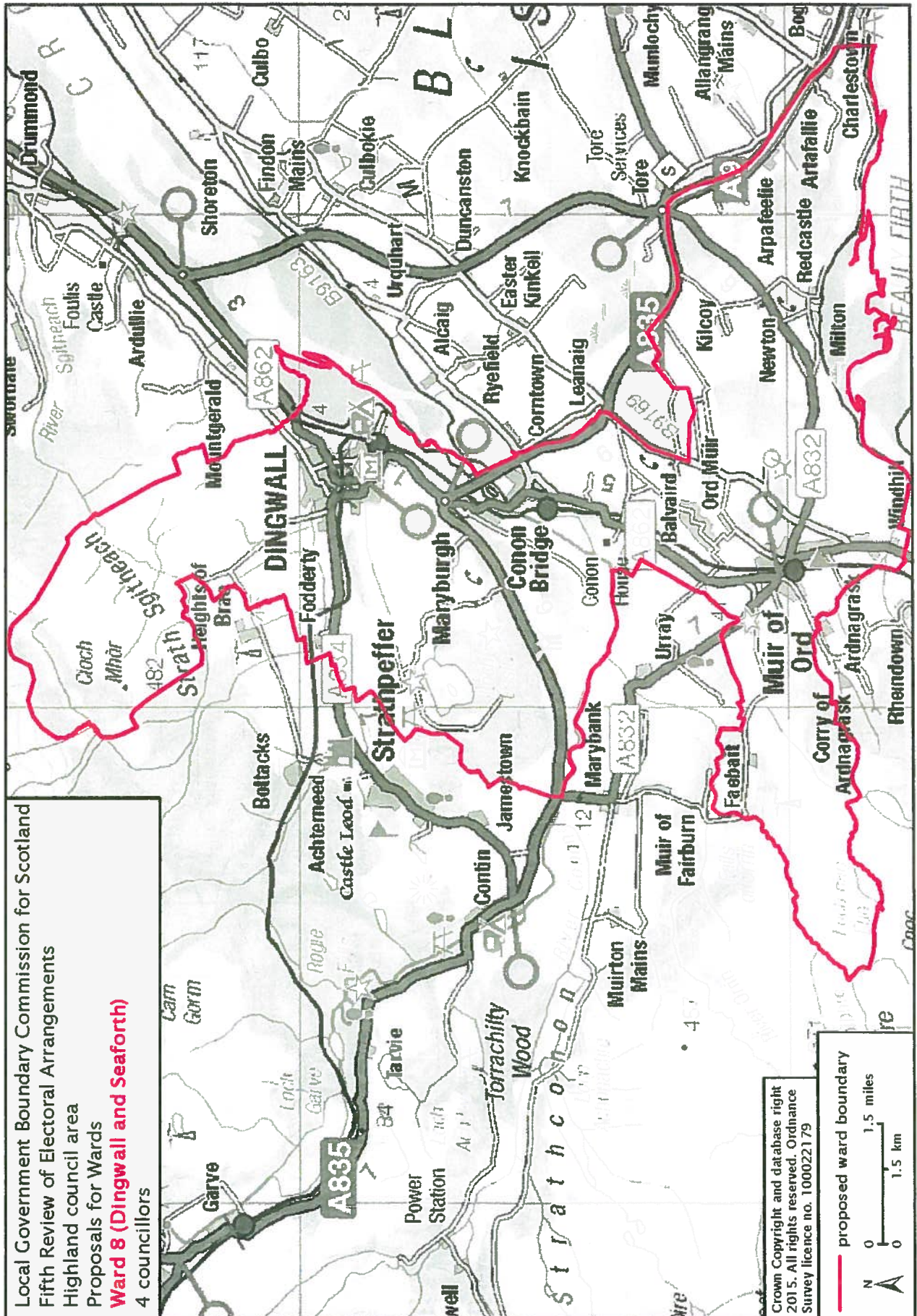
Local Government Boundary Commission for Scotland
 Fifth Review of Electoral Arrangements
 Highland council area
 Proposals for Wards
Ward 2 (Thurso and Northwest Caithness)
 4 councillors

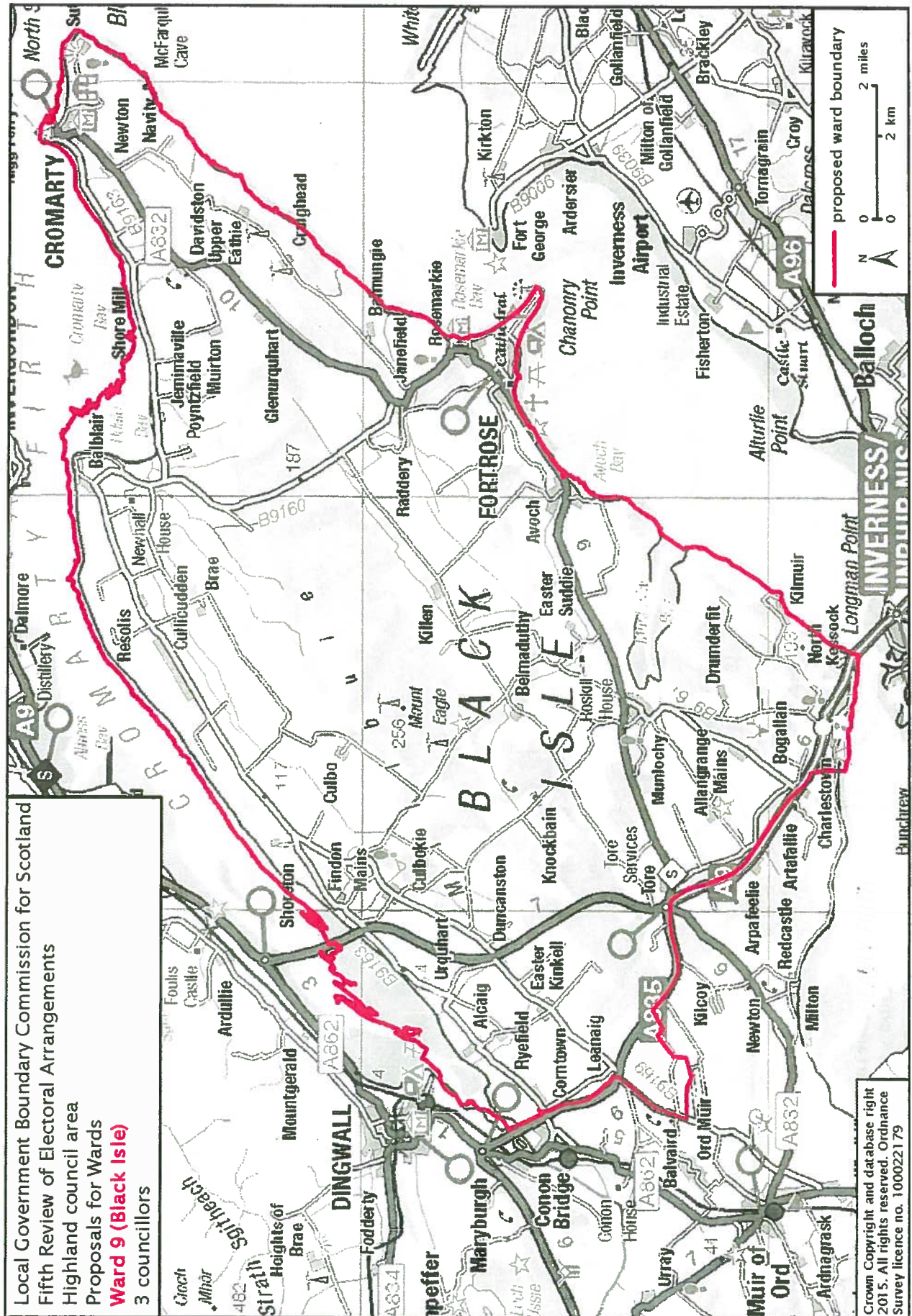
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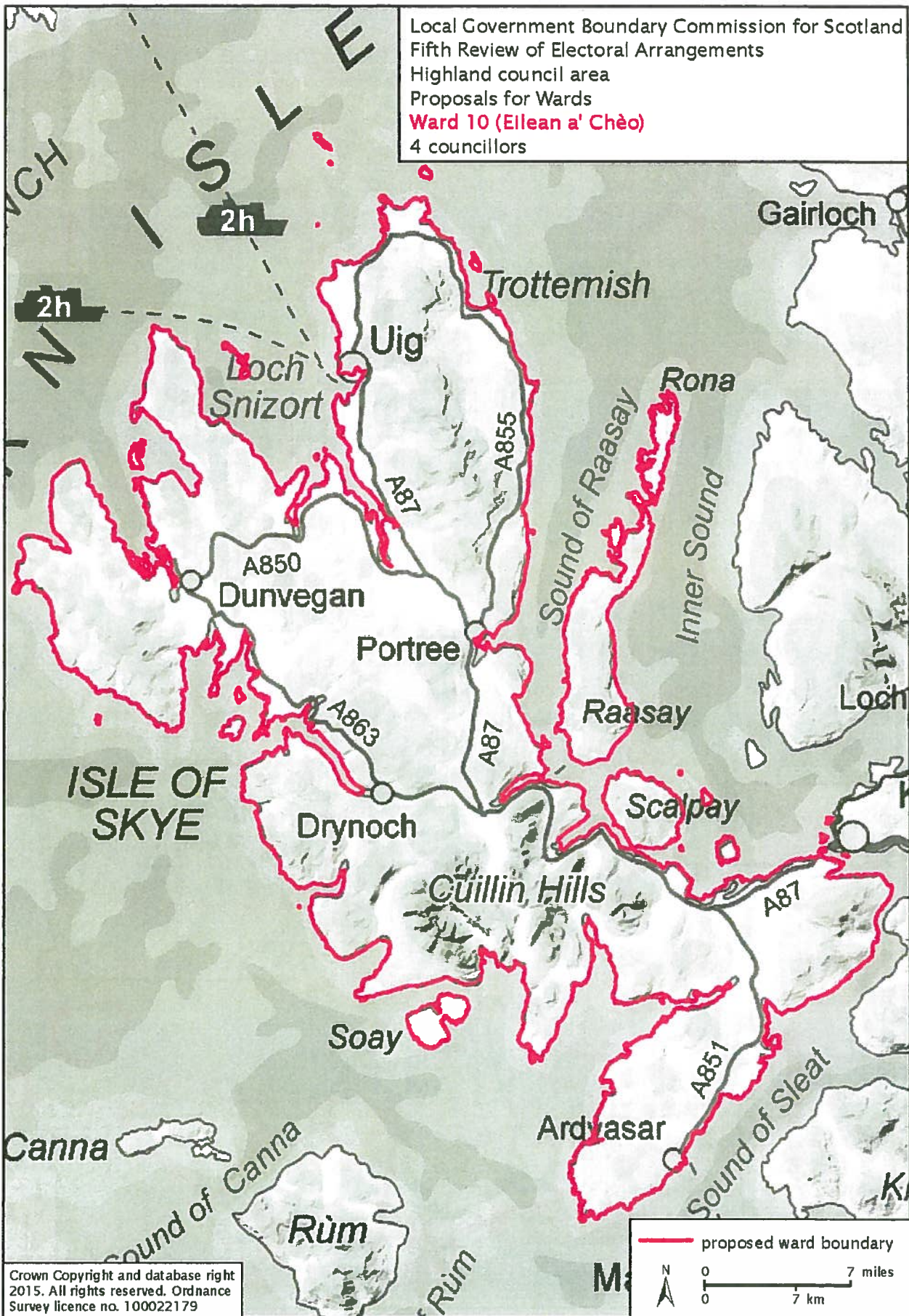


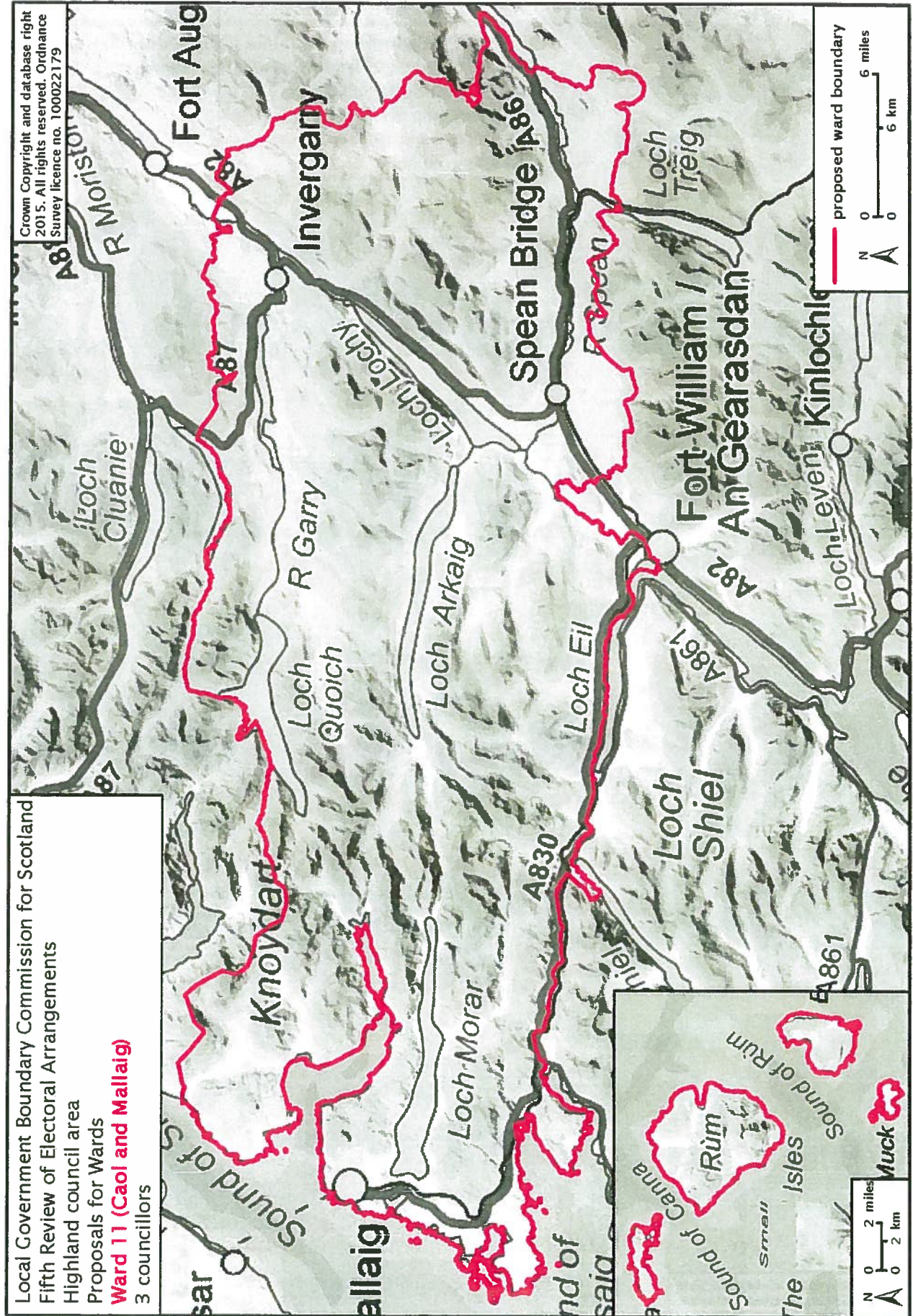


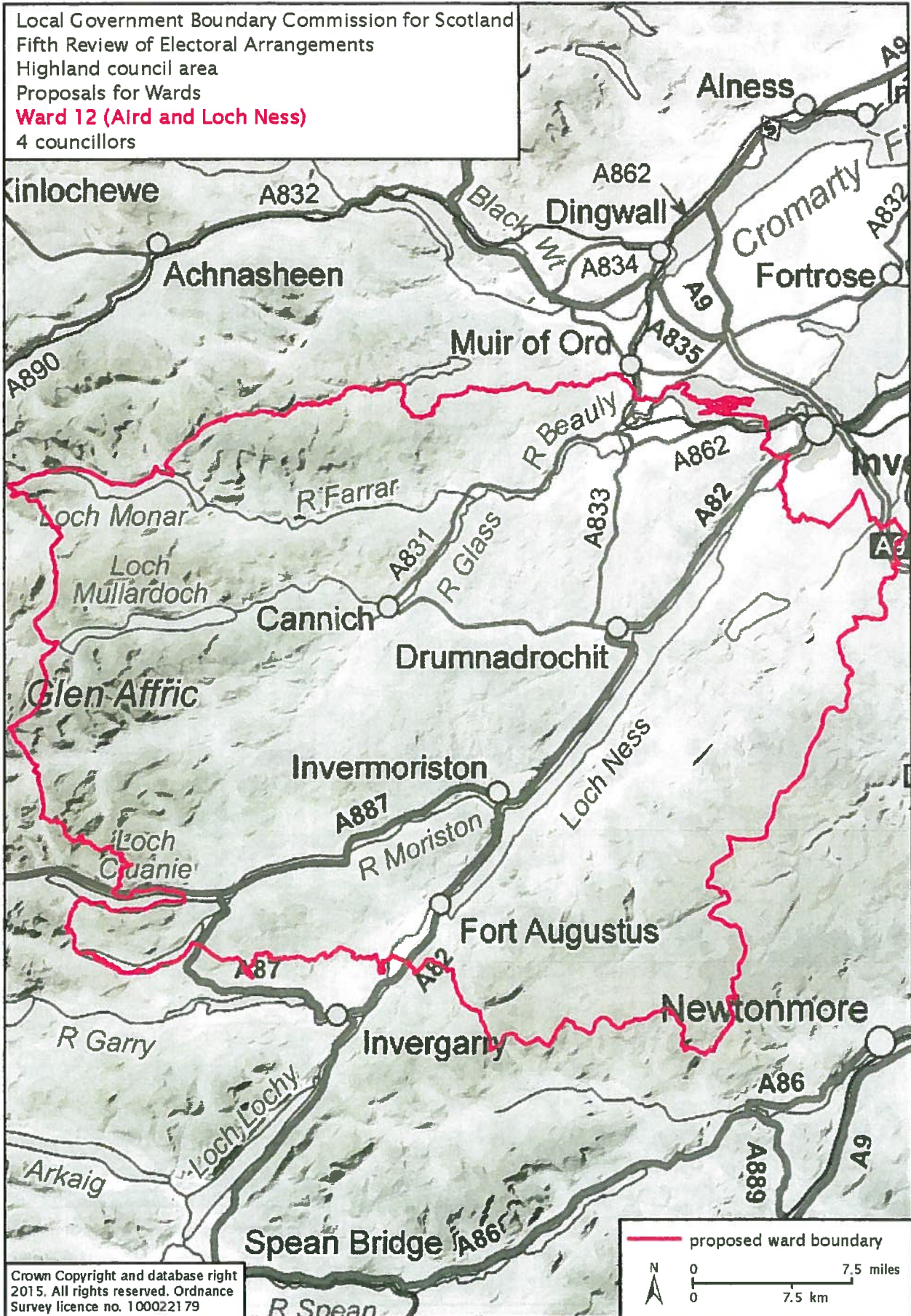


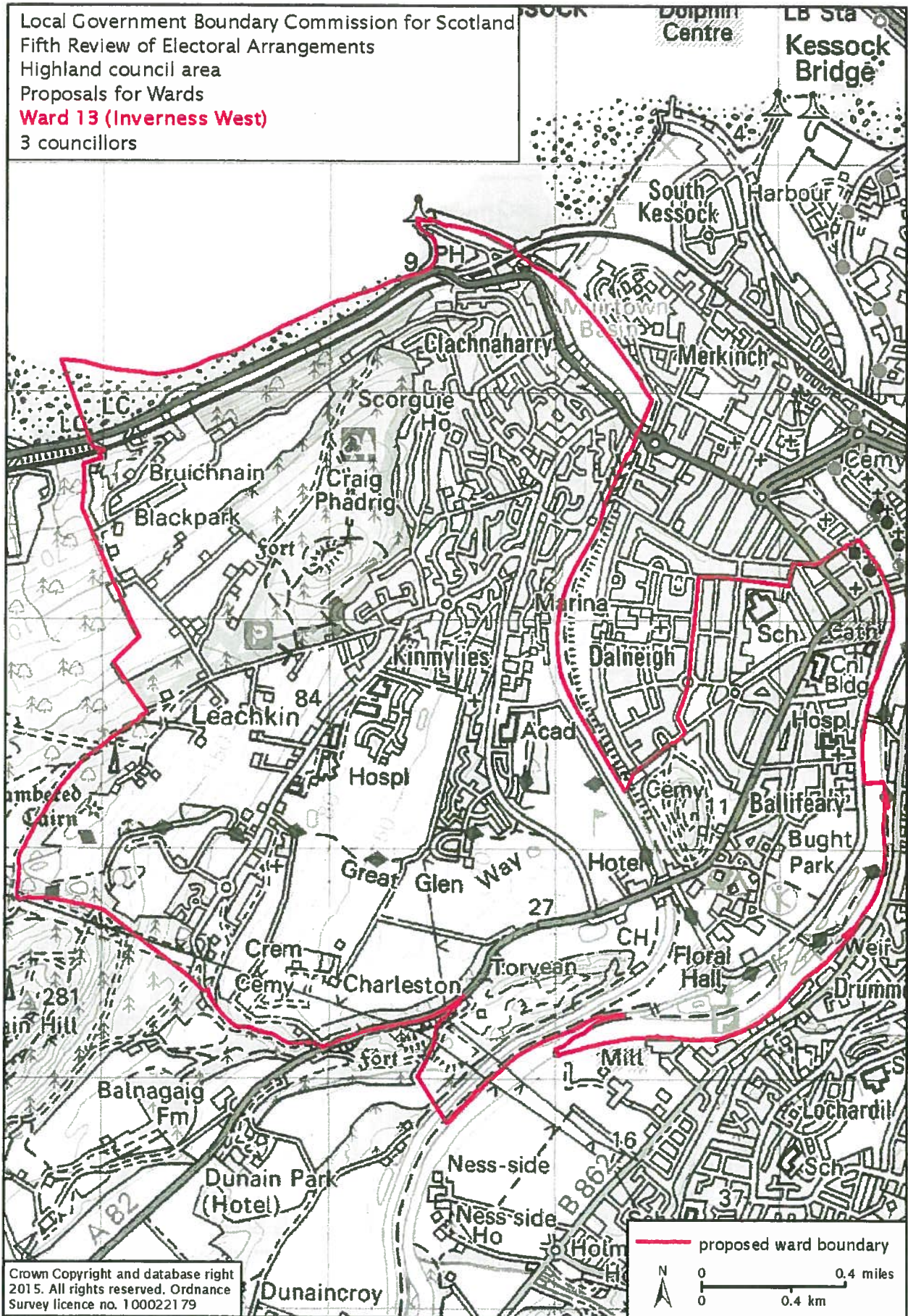


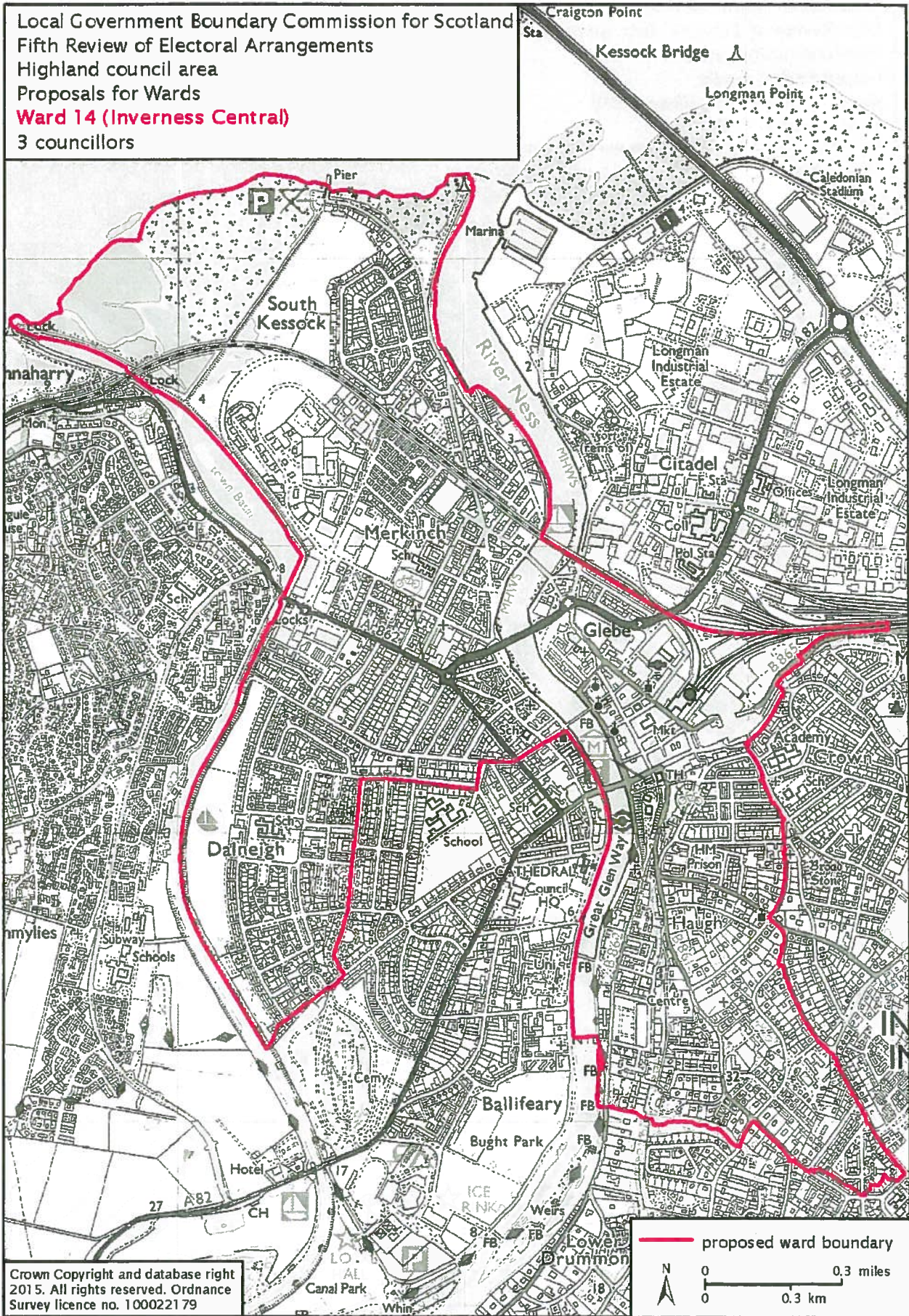


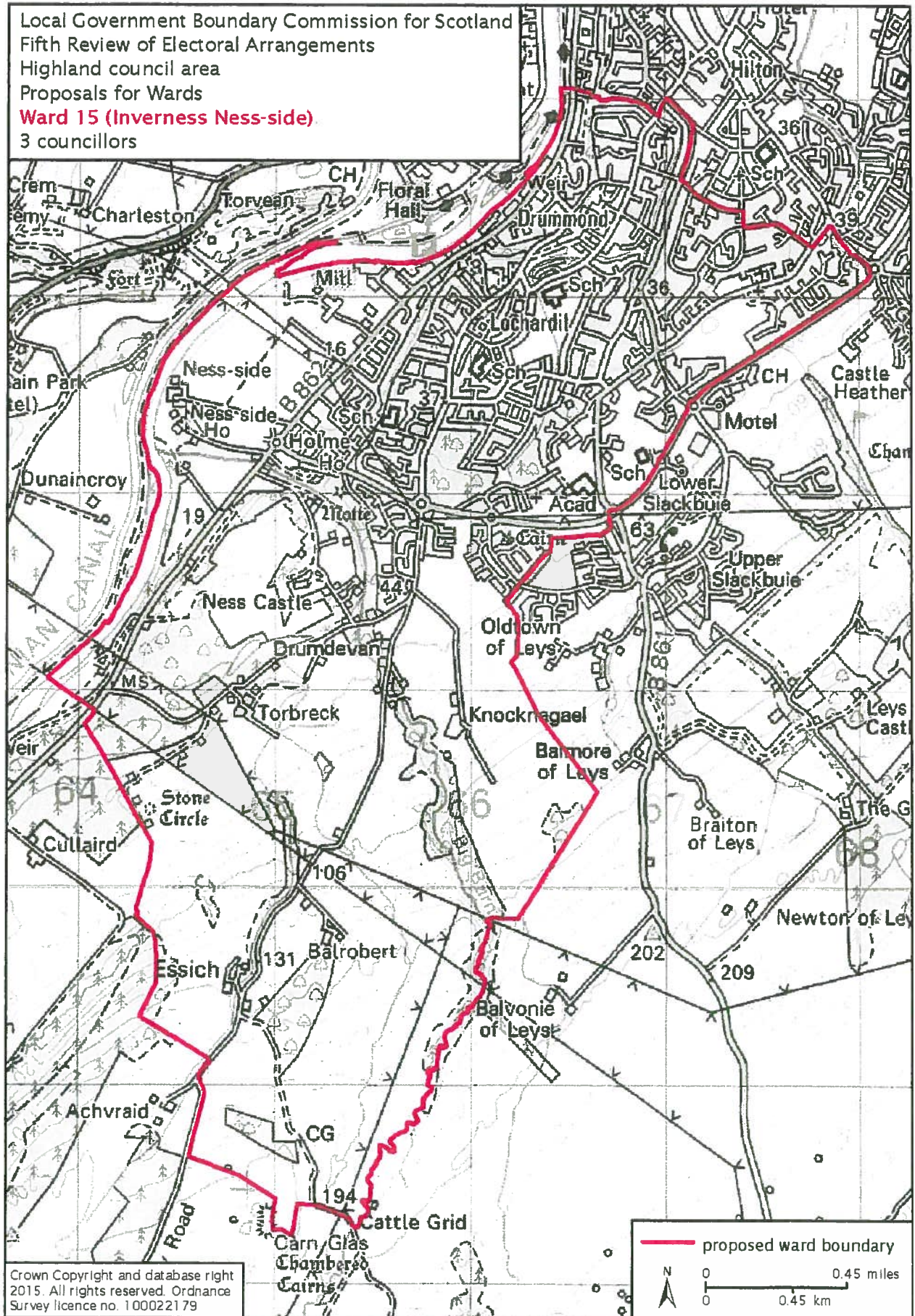


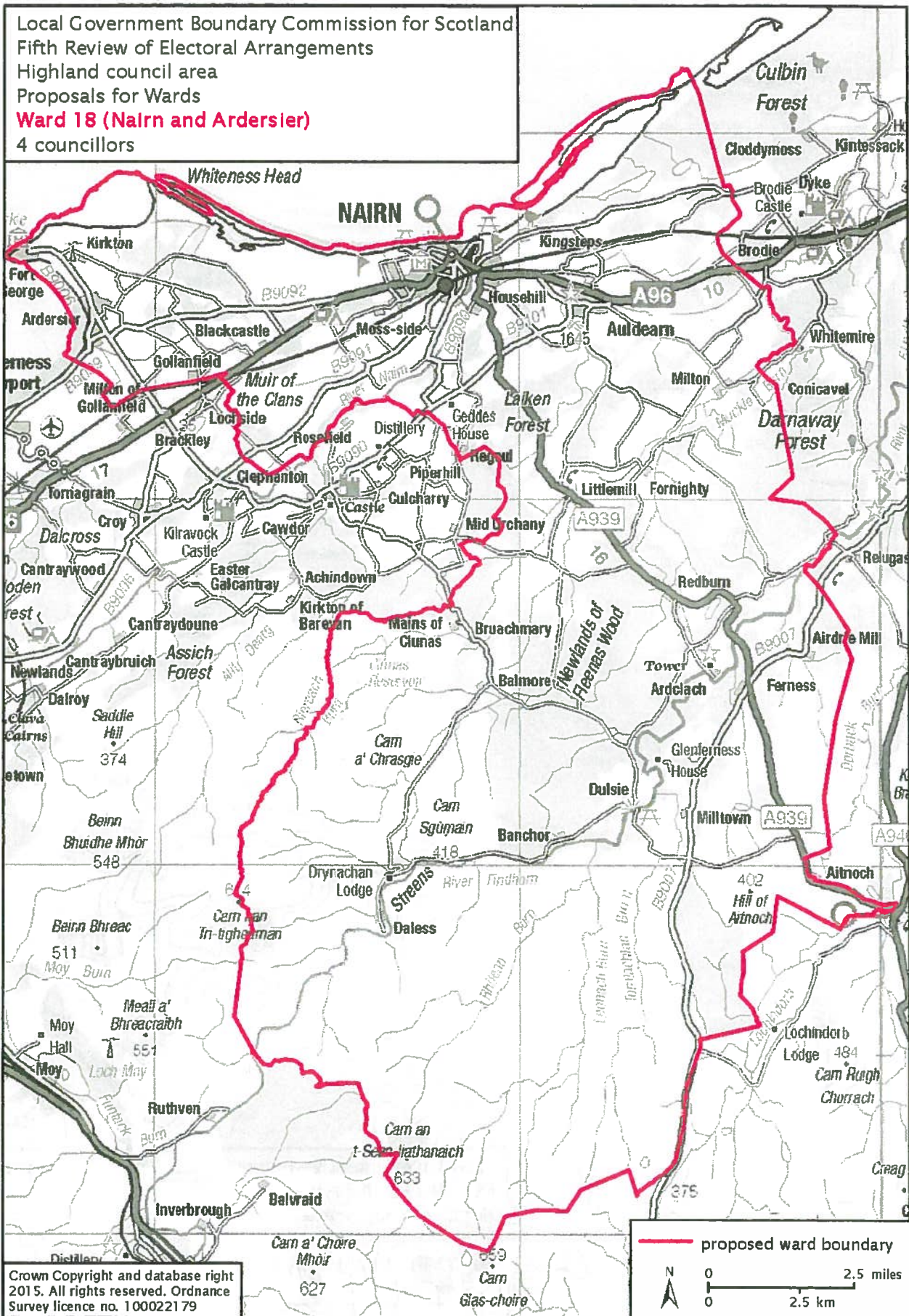


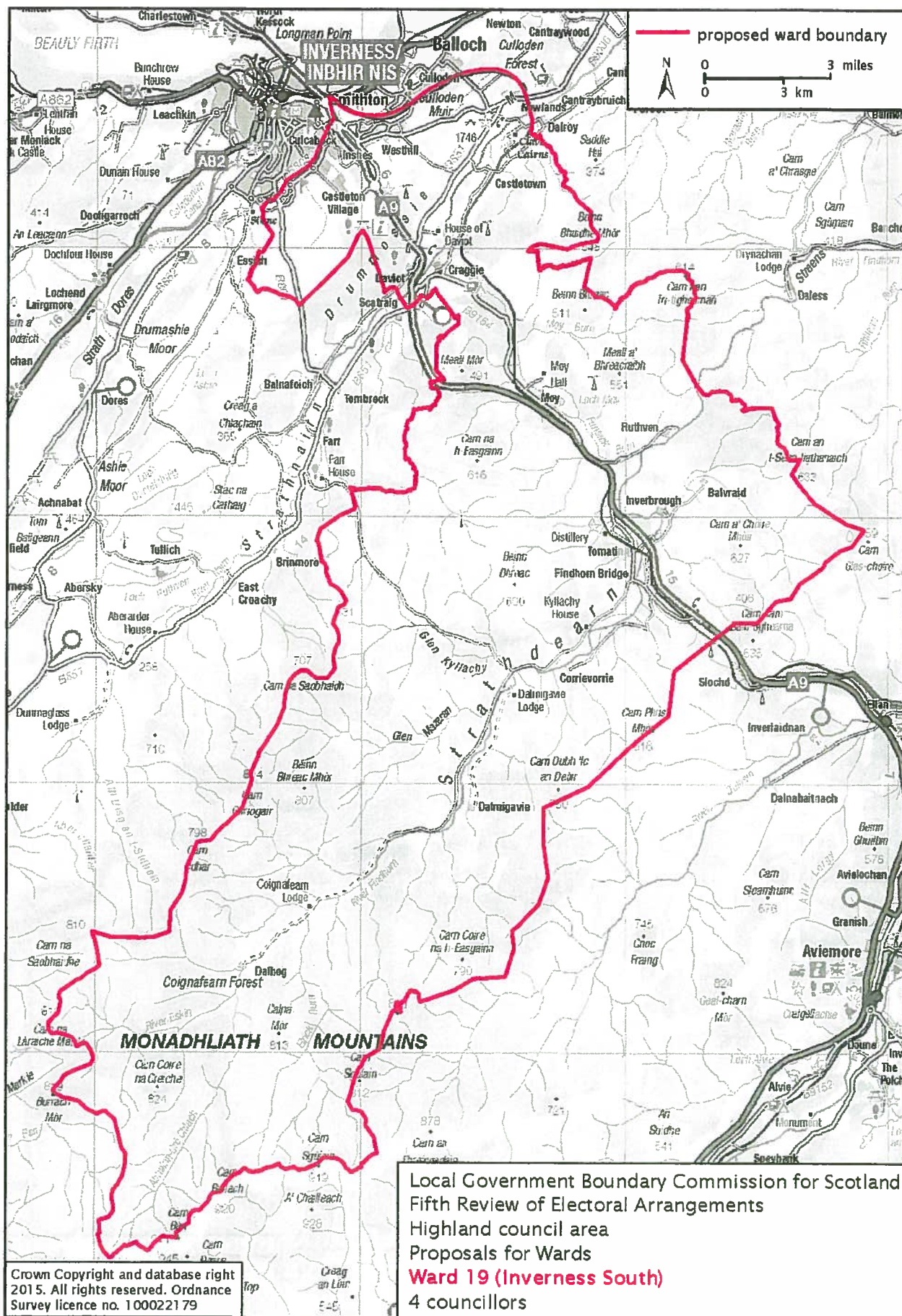


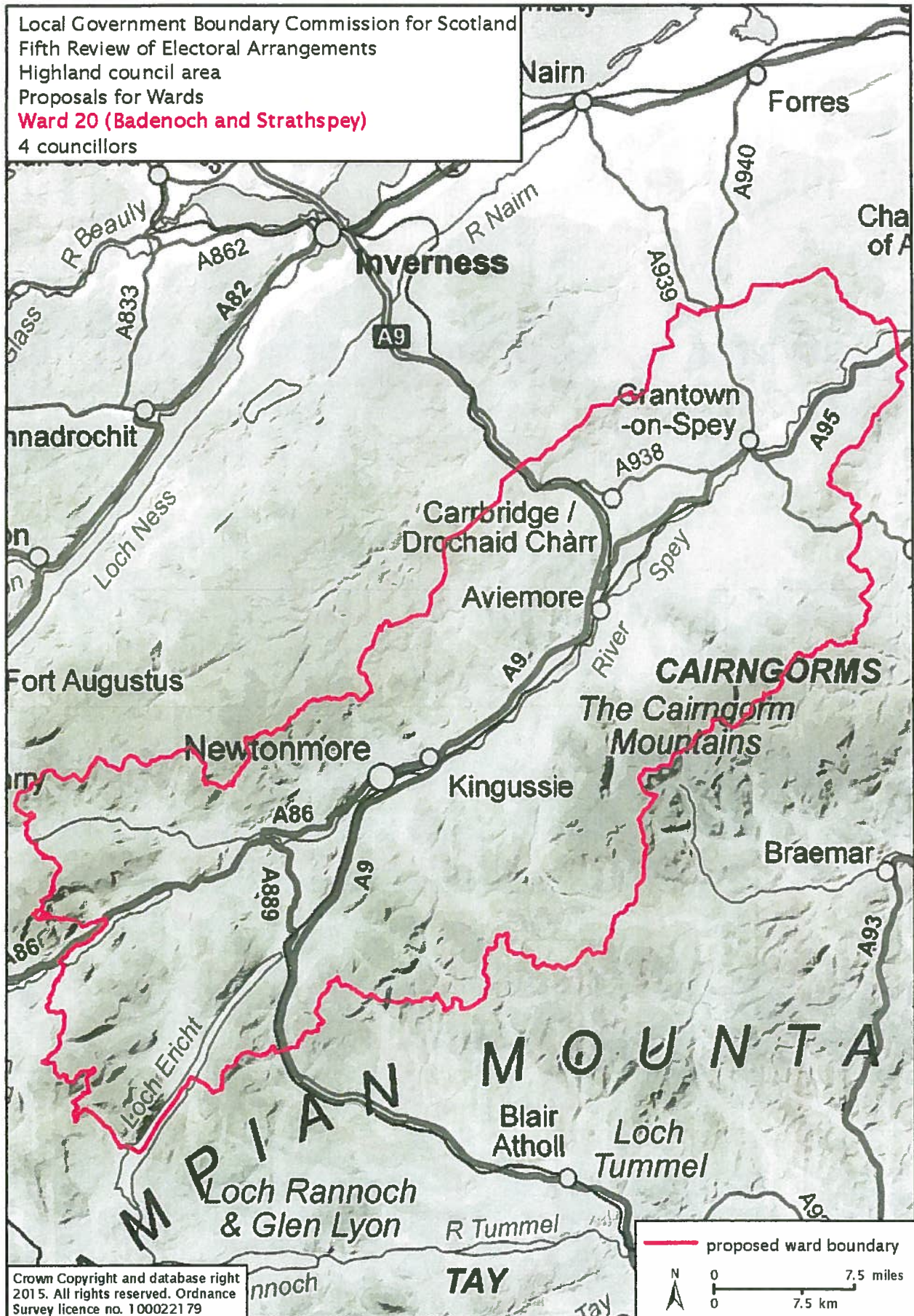


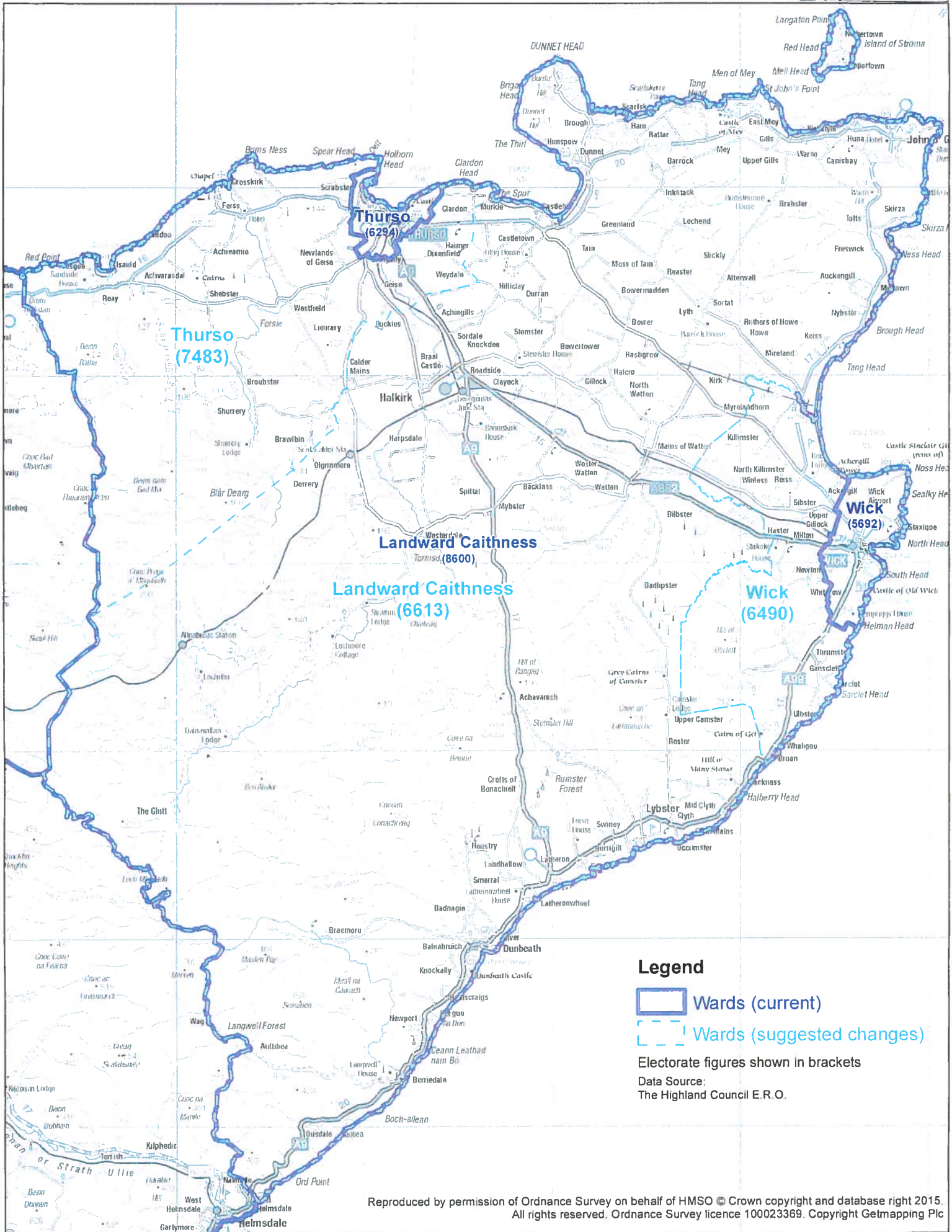












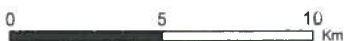
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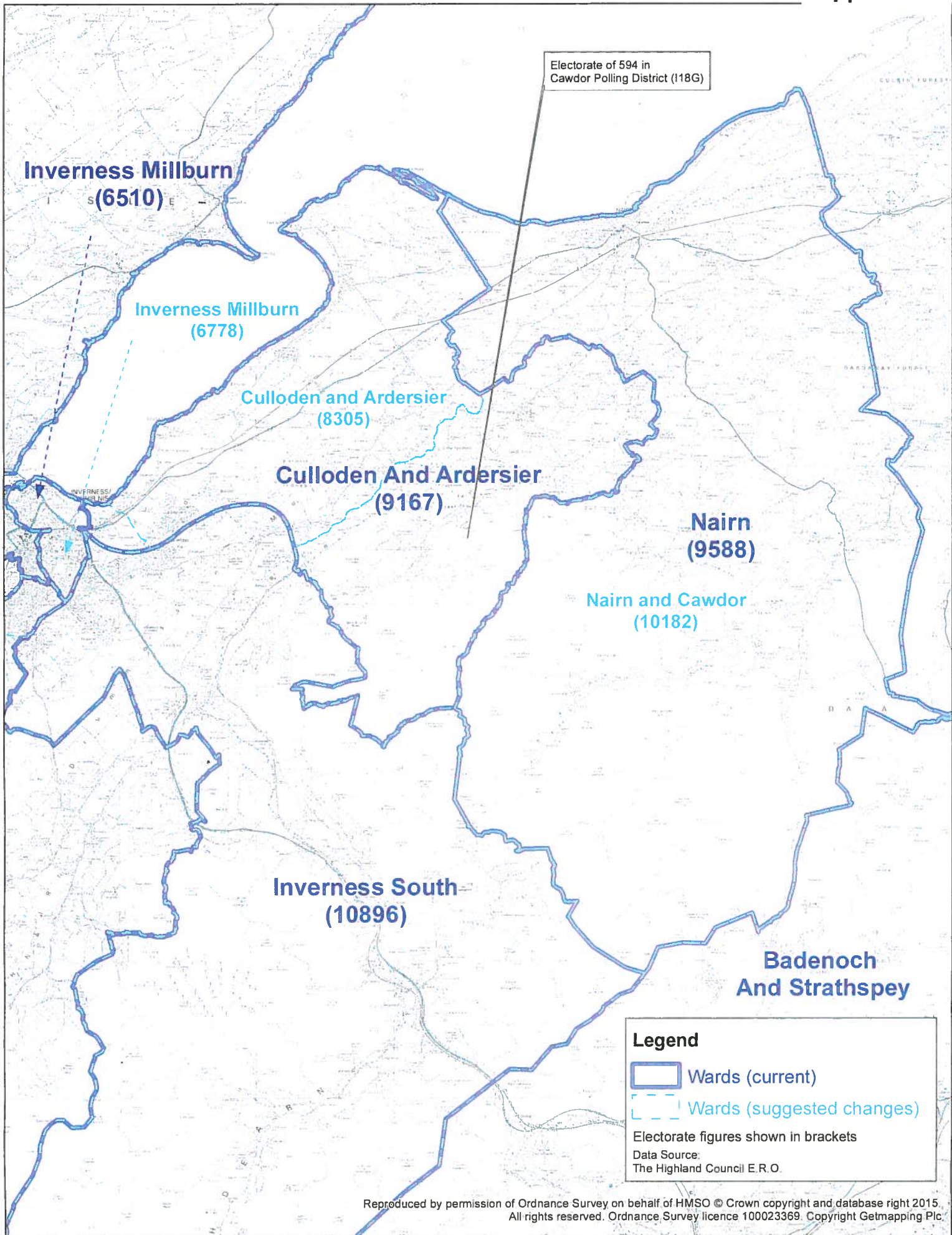
Suggested Boundary Changes

Wards



Ref. gis632
 Date: 21 April 2015





Legend

- Wards (current)
- Wards (suggested changes)

Electorate figures shown in brackets
 Data Source:
 The Highland Council E.R.O.

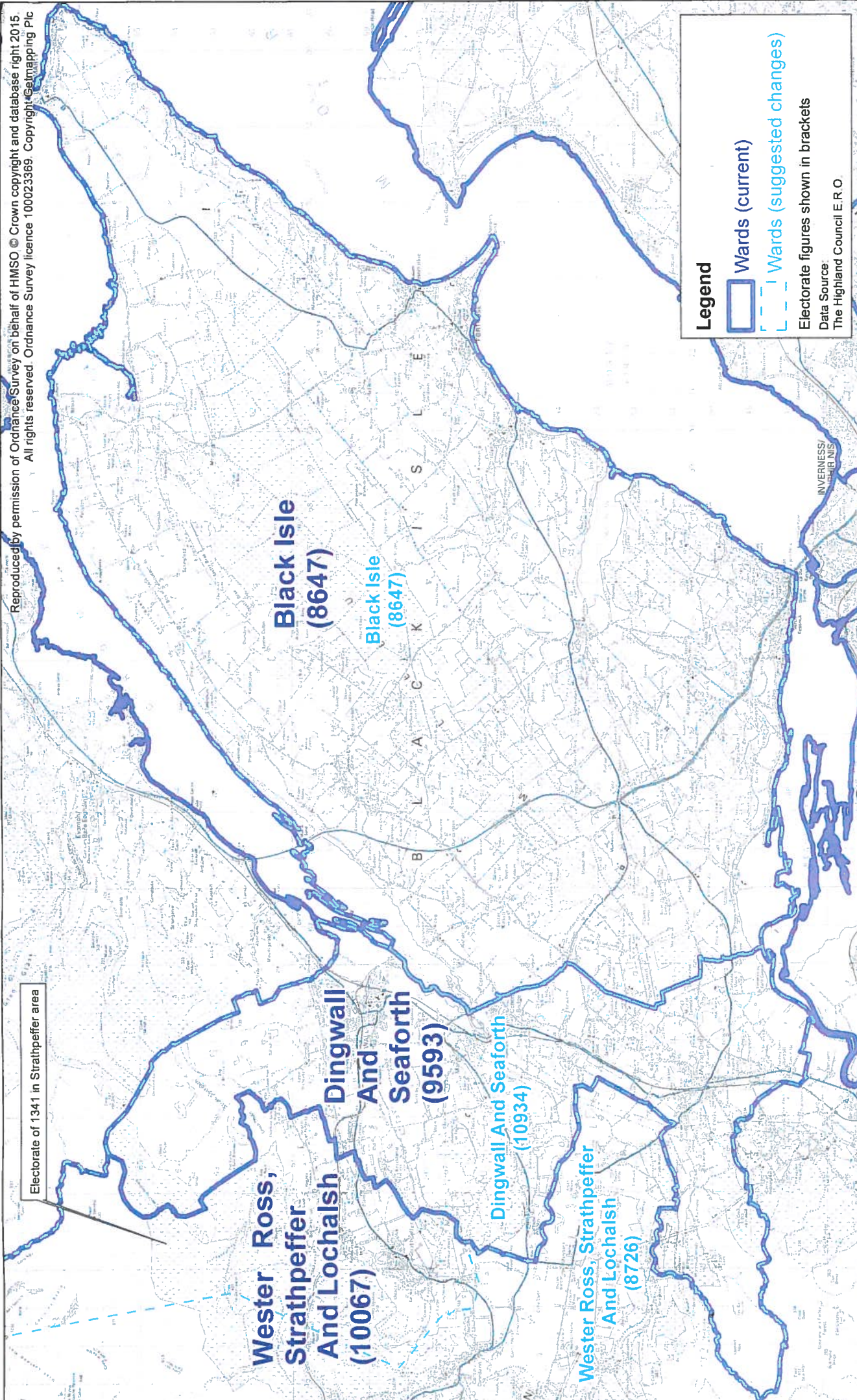
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Suggested Boundary Changes

Wards



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Suggested Boundary Changes (Strathpeffer transfer only, Redcastle remaining in Black Isle)



Ref: gis632
Date: 27 April 2015